

BOWLS HAMPSHIRE MANAGERS REPORT 2014

MIDDLETON CUP

INTERNAL TRIAL MATCH

This year we started off the Middleton Cup Campaign with an internal trial where 60 players from across the county were invited to take part after nominations from each of the divisional areas.

From my point of view, the trial was a great success as a lot of the players stepped up to the plate and showed me what depth we have within the county.

During this trial I arranged to have a marker designated to each rink so they could mark all the bowls delivered and score them, this then gave me an insight to their consistency over the whole game and whether pressure bowls were played when needed.

EXTERNAL TRIAL MATCHES

The following week a second trial was held at Atherley BC in which we played a match against Buckinghamshire CBA.

I felt the overall performance was average, albeit we won the game, and a few changes were needed as some of the compatibility within the rinks was not quite right.

The trials were finished with a match away to Sussex CBA at Worthing Pavilion BC. This I felt was somewhat different to the previous week where the team looked good, performed well and the team spirit was there.

Winning on all 6 rinks and by over 70 shots put us in good spirits for the first match the following week.

FIRST GROUP MATCH - Hampshire 137 (18pts) vs I.O.W 86 (4pts)

Chris Daniels was announced as Captain for this year's campaign.

Hampshire started strongly by forming a 19 shot lead after 5 ends and although this was narrowed to 12 by ten ends the team dug deep and pushed on to win comfortably by 51 shots. Good start to the group and lots of positives to be taken from the game.

SECOND GROUP MATCH - Hampshire 111 (16pts) vs Middlesex CBA 103 (6pts)

Unfortunately due to being in Hospital I was unable to attend this match. The reports back were that the green was of a very poor standard and some of their players were more than a few minutes late.

All the team put their heads down and managed to come home with a valuable 16pts and 8 more shots to add to the total.

THIRD GROUP MATCH - Hampshire 153 (18pts) vs Kent 93 (4pts)

What can I say, one of the best Hampshire performances I have ever seen. Each and every player on the green did their bit and the team spirit could be felt all around the green.

The rinks of Marsland, Daniels, Marchant and Ward all brought home good wins while the other 2 rinks of Morgan and May done there bit by keeping the experienced Kent skips of Gordon Chalton and Duncan Hanmore quiet for the whole game. (another 60 shots and now a shot difference of 119)

FOURTH AND FINAL GROUP MATCH - Hampshire 115 (13pts) vs Bowls Oxford 115 (9pts)

Going into the game we were all aware that 15pts from the game would guarantee a place in the quarter Finals.

The game was always tight from the outset but at 18 ends Hampshire managed to gain a 16 shot lead and looked as if they were going to win comfortably. Not sure if Oxford stepped it up a gear or we fell asleep, either way to lose a 16 shot lead over the last 18 ends was disappointing. The waiting game now began as Kent had beaten the Isle of Wight by 20pts to 2 and would require 21 pts from their final match to overtake us and progress through the group.

Kent lost to Oxford and Hampshire were through to the quarter finals where we would face Surrey CBA

QUARTER FINAL MATCH - Hampshire 117 vs Surrey 116

For those who were there, will know this was one of the most exciting finishes to a game of bowls ever.

Hampshire started strongly again, moving to a 20 shot lead at 10 ends, but Surrey then fought back and it was all square at the 15 end stage. Then with one rink left on the green with 2 ends to play Hampshire saw themselves 1 shot behind.

Two amazing bowls from Russell Morgan, the penultimate end saw him draw through a pack of bowls to a jack no more than 6 inches from the ditch where he touched the side of the jack and it fell into the ditch and held 1 shot. On the last end he then found himself match down with his last bowl to play, the jack, this time, in the ditch and had to draw to the edge of the green to get the shot, guess what? He did and the opposing skipped missed the drive and Hampshire goes through by 1.

Must say that all 24 players on the green played their part during the game and this was a great team effort.

SEMI-FINAL MATCH - Hampshire 136 vs Wiltshire 89

In the Semi-Final, Hampshire faced a strong Wiltshire side. In a game that was played in torrential rain, the whole of the Hampshire Team rolled up their sleeves and produced some of the best bowls I have seen Hampshire play for some years. Hampshire came out winner by 47 shots.

THE FINAL - Hampshire 126 vs Norfolk 106

Once again the final was somewhat dictated by the weather, seeing the game stopped on two occasions for lightening and flooding. Hampshire got off to a great start, going into a 20+ shot lead at half way. After the first stoppage due to rain, Norfolk came out hard and narrowed the gap before rain stopped play for a second time. When the game finally got underway, Hampshire came out running and doubled their lead in the next two ends. This seemed to be the final blow for Norfolk, who conceded the game to Hampshire with ends still remaining.

Hampshire is the 2014 Middleton Cup Champions, for the first time in over 40 years.

A big well done has to be given to each and every one of the squad members who took part in this campaign. All the players and reserves played their part in bringing the Middleton Cup home to Hampshire. Must say in the words of Chris Daniels "ONE TEAM".